DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 372 411 CS 214 440

AUTHOR Israel, Elfie
TITLE Developing Students' Discriminating Taste in Literature through Cooperative Learning Groups and Seminar Discussions.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 96p.; Ed.D. Practicum, Nova Southeastern University.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Childrens Literature; Creative Writing; Editing; *Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; High Schools; *Literature Appreciation; Peer Evaluation; Poetry; Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Aesthetic Reading; Taste Discrimination

ABSTRACT

A practicum was designed to help 40 students enrolled in creative writing classes at a suburban high school develop criteria with which to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of what they read. They were able to discern the differences between good and bad literature. Students were active participants in the process, performing skits, writing prose and poetry, and individually formulating criteria for evaluating the works of professionals and of their peers. Their final products were children's books they designed and wrote. Prose and poetry samples were disseminated, pre- and postsurveys were administered, students were trained in the peer editing process, and students were helped to prepare peer editing critique sheets. Analysis of the data revealed that the students could distinguish between good and bad literature. (Two tables of data, survey instruments and evaluation forms for book critiques, poetry evaluation, skit evaluation, and college essay critiques are included. Contains 29 references.) (Author/RS)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 372 411

# Developing Students' Discriminating Taste in Literature Through Cooperative Learning Groups and Seminar Discussions

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
E. Israel
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC).

by

Elfie Israel

Cluster 60

A Practicum I Report Presented to the E.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1994

CS214440

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRACTICUM APPROVAL

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Amalia Zagami

Mrs. Amalia Zagami

Assistant Prinicpal
Title

Nova High School, 3600 College Avenue,
Davie, FL 33314
Address

August 1, 1994
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Elfie Israel under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

July 27, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. W. Anderson
Dr. William Anderson, Adviser

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank Dr. William Anderson, Dr. Steven Pomerantz, and Mrs. Amalia Zagami, for their kind words, assistance, and encouragement, which were so greatly appreciated.

The writer is grateful to Mr. Jim Beach and Ms. Carlene Hirsch for their tireless assistance in videotaping, photographing, and laminating materials; to colleagues who filled out forms, surveyed students, and shared their experiences and thoughts; to creative writing students for their cooperation and understanding; and to Mrs. Marge Marcus, who always understood what was expected.

Additional thanks is given to Mr. Stuart Israel, the author's trusted reader and best friend; and to Sharon and Robert, her children, for their emotional support.

A special thanks is given to Mrs. and Mrs. Joseph Kaniuk. Although they are no longer with us, it was their love for education which inspired their daughter and made this possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS


| | | Page |
|---|---|---|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS | | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES | | v |
| Chapter | | |
| I | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| | Description of Community | 1 |
| | Writer's Work Setting and Role | 1 |
| II | STUDY OF THE PROBLEM | 4 |
| | Problem Description. | 4 |
| | Problem Documentation. | 5 |
| | Causative Analysis | 10 |
| | Relationship of the Problem to the Literature. | 12 |
| III | ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS. | 20 |
| | Goals and Expectations | 20 |
| | Expected Outcomes. | 20 |
| | Measurement of Outcomes. | 22 |
| IV | SOLUTION STRATEGY. | 24 |
| | Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions | 24 |
| | Description of Selected Solution | 25 |
| | Report of Action Taken | 32 |
| V | RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS | 41 |
| | Results | 41 |
| | Discussion | 45 |
| | Recommendations | 66 |
| | Dissemination | 67 |
| REFERENCES. | | 68 |

Page

Appendices

A A SCALE TO MEASURE ATTITUDE TOWARD POETRY . . . . 72

B READING - WRITING SURVEY . . . . . 74

C STUDENTS' CHILDREN'S BOOK CRITIQUE . . . . . 77

D STUDENT EVALUATION OF LITERARY WORKS . . . . . 79

E "WOMAN I ADMIRE" . . . . . 81

F EVALUATION OF POEM . . . . . 84

G SKIT EVALUATION . . . . . 86

H COLLEGE ESSAY CRITIQUE SHEET . . . . . 88

## LIST OF TABLES

Table

1 Number of Students Evaluating Literary Works on a Scale of 9 (High) to 1 (Low) . . . . . 43

2 Number of Students Evaluating Award Winning Children's Books on a Scale of 5 (High) to 1 (Low) . . . . . 44

ABSTRACT

Developing Students' Discriminating Taste in Literature Through Cooperative Learning Groups and Seminar Discussions. Elfie Israel, 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Writing Evaluations/Literature Appreciation/Peer Evaluations/Children's Literature/Self-Evaluation (Groups)

This practicum was designed to help high school students develop criteria with which to evaluate the aesthetic qualities of what they read. They were able to discern the differences between good and bad literature. Students were active participants in the process, performing skits, writing prose and poetry, and individually formulating criteria for evaluating the works of professionals and of their peers. Their final products were children's books they designed and wrote.

The writer disseminated prose and poetry samples to students, administered pre-evaluations and presurveys and postsurveys, trained students in the peer editing process, and helped students prepare peer editing critique sheets.

Analysis of the data revealed that the students could distinguish between good and bad literature.

**********

Permission Statement

As a student in the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies, I do (✓) do not ( ) give permission to Nova Southeastern University to distribute copies of this practicum report on request from interested individuals. It is my understanding that Nova Southeastern University will not charge for this dissemination except to cover the costs of microfiching, handling, and mailing of the materials.

July 23, 1994
Date

Elfie Israel
Signature

# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Description of Community

The county in which the school is located is the second most populous one in its state. Its population has increased by 23.3% during the last decade while the student population has increased by 43.5 in the past 8 years, nearly double the growth rate of the county population. Average annual growth rate for non-minority students in the county was 2% a year; whereas the average annual growth rate for minority students in the county was 13.2%. The school district is the largest accredited one in the country.

## Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's setting and background are unique. The worksetting is a suburban high school which is part of a four school complex; however, there is almost no communication among the four schools. The two elementary schools feed into the middle school, half of the students there attend the high school; the other half choose to go to their neighborhood schools.

The writer's high school has no boundaries, yet it is considered a magnet school. All students must apply for admission; however, those who attend the middle school are

automatically eligible for the high school. Because of space constraints, the number of students in the high school cannot exceed 1,700. The school board does have certain requirements for admission into the schools which comprise the complex. No more than 5% of the students may come from any one school district unless it is overcrowded and 33% must be Black. Furthermore, students' names are put on a list and they are selected by date of application after the aforementioned requirements are met.

The school was established as a research and development facility for the county and this is why the student population is supposed to proportionately reflect the racial and cultural composition of the county. At the moment only race and gender are incorporated in the admission policy; there is no attempt to reflect the multicultural community. The high school was one of the first to be aligned with Ted Sizer's Coalition of Essential Schools. The writer has taught Advanced Placement English as a part of the coalition, taught at Brown University's Summer Coalition high school, and is still involved with the Coalition and its principles.

The writer is an English teacher, also licensed to teach social studies and the gifted. She has taught students on all levels from the ages of 8-18 for 22 years. Her experience includes teaching in an urban environment, on a small Caribbean island, and in both private and public

schools. This year she is teaching three classes of Advanced Placement English and two classes of creative writing. She is also the faculty advisor of the school's literary magazine and is a co-editor of the state's English Journal. She has just become one of the judges who will evaluate whether articles should be published in the English Journal, an official organ of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

The advanced placement classes in English language are theoretically homogeneous. All the students are college bound, but their reading and writing abilities vary from PSAT verbal scores of 350 to 700. The two creative writing classes are heterogeneous with students in grades 10, 11, and 12, whose reading scores are from 300-800. These two classes are elective and will be the subjects of this practicum.

## CHAPTER II

## STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

### Problem Description

The problems experienced at the writer's school are impacting education throughout the United States. Students did not distinguish good from bad literature. They groaned when they were given a reading assignment, and they sometimes did not read the required assignments. When given two or more prose or poetry selections to compare, they were unable or unwilling to do so. They could not write a book or poetry review, and during class discussions they could not explain why a particular work was or was not good. Equally disturbing was their inability to discriminate between high and low quality in literature. Curriculum demands, literary magazine deadlines, and a complacent sense that the situation would right itself were some reasons why this problem had not been solved. The major reason was time. Even though the curriculum in creative writing was flexible and vague, this project was time consuming and required much planning and teacher initiative in writing a curriculum to solve the problems that students do not have discriminating taste vis-a-vis literature.

## Problem Documentation

Evidence of the problem was supported by observation, teacher questionnaires, surveys, anecdotal material gathered in small discussion groups with other teachers and with students, library records, reading test scores, journal entries, and interviews. Teacher observations were made during seminar discussions and individual conferences.

Seventy out of 100 students disliked 9 out of 12 of the books they had been assigned to read in the past 3 years, yet they could not discuss why they felt this way. Their favorite word was "boring" when attempting to describe their feelings and thoughts about Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" and about Dicken's Hard Times. When asked to react in writing to books they have read expressing their feelings about them, 10 of 100 reacted with no more than "I liked" or "I didn't like." Coupled with this was their incomprehension as to why they had been assigned certain books. Seventy of the students had a required summer reading; 45 of them could not explain why it was of high or low quality nor could they support liking or disliking it.

Students were also unable to defend their opinions of the quality of their writing or of that of their peers. Fifty out of 70 were personally offended at any comment they perceived as being non-complimentary or critical. They believed that labeling papers good or bad was strictly a personal judgement call. This exacerbated teaching them

writing skills which went beyond simple grammar rules. It helped explain why they preferred not to read or judge material for the school's literary magazine and were reluctant to enter writing contests. Only one student submitted an entry to the county's short story contest. Without knowing what to look for in writing, revising became nearly impossible. On the first creative writing poetry and prose pieces they were given, 53 out of 70 chose not to revise what they had written, believing that their pieces were either misunderstood or not appreciated. The writer was surprised by their hubris as well as by their disdain for the opinions of their peers.

The teacher gathered data from questionnaires to determine how the students rated children's literature. Individually, and in groups, they could not explain with any supportive data why they did or did not like a particular children's book. Twenty out of 50 disliked two Caldecott winners by Maurice Sendak, In the Night Kitchen and Where the Wild Things Are. Most of those who liked them remembered them from childhood. Thirty-five out of 50 considered Harold and the Purple Crayon to be inane and senseless, yet 15 recognized its imaginative flights of fancy. The students did not and could not generate a list of criteria for evaluating children's literature. When forced to do so, they concluded that books with limited vocabulary which children could easily comprehend were good,

as were those with obvious moral lessons. They ignored aesthetics, imaginative appeal, word play, and playfulness. Didactic books ranked high; 40 out of 50 thought Gloria Goes to Gay Pride excellent, simply because it dealt with homosexuality with sensitivity.

The teacher gathered data from surveys to find out if students read independently and voluntarily. Only 5 of the 70 had read a book over the summer. They were also asked if they evaluated what they read, how they selected the material to read, and how they would evaluate their own writing and that of others. Sixty-two of them enjoyed the summer reading; 47 of these could only explain why by saying, "It was interesting." Fifty-seven loved Stephen King and thought he was the best writer they have read, closely followed by Anne Rice. Poetry fared much worse. Three had voluntarily read a poem during the past year. Given Mark Twain's "Ode to Stephen Bots, Dec'd," a parody of 19th century sentimentalism, 44 out of the 50 ranked it 3 or higher on a 1-5 scale. They thought it was a good, serious, sad poem. Since Twain's intention was to parody sentimentalism in 19th century poetry, one would conclude they missed the point.

Students did not distinguish between the message and the method. If they liked the moral or idea of a piece, they liked the piece, regardless of the writing's quality. Thirty-seven out of 50 liked "Little Andrew" (another

sentimental 19th century poem) because it taught the children should not be careless in a boat. Students seemed to admire sentimental drivel and lack of clarity. They confused vagueness with imagery. Twenty-three out of 30 thought "Wild at Heart" was an example of excellent, vivid imagery.

Students were proud of the poems that they had written, especially when their peers interpreted them completely differently from the author's intent. They did not understand the difference between symbolic, abstract writing and vague, meaningless verse.

Twenty-five out of 50 students relied on Cliff notes and had not read the books assigned in English class. Although they ostensibly did so to understand the work, almost all admitted that they just hadn't read the work itself. This was especially troubling because the practice not only robbed the students of a rich linguistic experience, but it also robbed them of one more opportunity to hone thinking and inferential skills.

At a literary magazine reading students were asked to rate poems which, unbeknownst to them, had been written by recognized authors as well as by other students. Fourteen out of 18 rated the trite ones riddled with cliches much higher than those by accomplished and critically acclaimed poets. They could not defend their choices beyond a "I liked it" or "I was bored" comments. One student's poem,

which had placed fourth in the national contest sponsored by Scholastic Magazine was rated a 2 on a scale of 1-5. Seven of the students admitted they did not understand it; the other seven simply did not like it or did not agree with its imagery. Five said they did not understand the imagery. Poems by Adrienne Rich and Margaret Atwood were "rejected" and those by the churchyard sentimentalists vilified by Mark Twain were "accepted."

The author has spent a total of 5 hours speaking with six of her colleagues individually. Their observations tallied with her own. Their students relied on Cliff notes, disliked Shakespeare, loved Hallmark verses, and could not defend their artistic choices. Stephen King and Anne Rice reigned as the most widely read authors in their classes, too. Even fewer of their students read books voluntarily, and 40 out of 430 had read a book during the summer. All six teachers provided some reading time in the classroom, convinced that this was the only way of assuring that the students would read the material. Therefore, the inability of students to distinguish between the good and the bad in literature seemed to cut across grade and ability levels and affected all high school students.

The librarian confirmed these findings. The records show that very few poetry books or books about poets and poetry had been checked out in the past 5 years. On average 30 books were checked out of the school library daily during

that period. Of these, only 1 in 60 was connected with poetry in any way. Books of literary merit were checked out for research papers; only 1 in 50 was checked out for pleasurable reading.

Reading test scores indicated a decline in reading ability of specialized classes. The number of students enrolled in the advanced placement courses whose reading scores are below the minimum required has increased from 10 out of 60 to 22 out of 70. Practice reading tests also indicated a decline in reading ability. Twenty-five percent of the students scored higher than 60% on a practice reading passage as compared with 45% scoring 60% or higher 5 years ago. Twenty percent of this year's students had difficulty reading and understanding George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" as compared with 10% five years ago. Interviews with students indicated that they were reluctant to evaluate the writings of professionals, of themselves, and of their peers.

## Causative Analysis

The inability of students to distinguish between good and poor literature might have been due to several factors. They had no criteria for judging; they also lacked the appropriate vocabulary to do so, and did not know analytical and descriptive words they could use. For example, not familiar with the term anachronism, they had a difficult time explaining succinctly and clearly why an alarm clock or

a Ferrari did not belong in The Parable of the Prodigal Son. Unsure of the meaning of tone, they could not discuss it. Unable to recognize cliches and trite expressions, they mistook these for good writing. Their limited vocabulary also impeded their understanding. Unfamiliar with figurative language, they tended to read too literally. Ten out of 60 students understood the first three pages of Beloved, 23 understood chapters 22 and 23, and 35 understood page 185. They often did not understand what they read; therefore, they could not evaluate it or, if they did, they found it wanting and considered it boring.

Many students worked in order to drive cars so they could socialize on weekends. Many spent their spare time watching television. Shopping in the malls was a favorite diversion. The beaches beckoned, and they obeyed the sirens' call. To evaluate one needed time to read, to question, to ponder.

Students were also unaccustomed to responding to questions of quality and to having their opinions valued. Too few teachers use Bloom's taxonomy when preparing questions on literature. They may be too intent on making sure the material is understood. They may feel too rushed and pressured to cover the curriculum. They may, like a teaching intern interviewed, "not believe in it" or be too frightened of losing control of a class by encouraging dissent. The writer remembers the shock she felt when her

gifted 10th graders reacted negatively and vociferously to Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" or when no-one laughed at the New Yorker cartoon she shared with them.

It may be futile to expect students to value what society itself seems to hold in low regard, namely literature. A survey indicated that all of them lived in homes where there are books; half of them have observed their parents reading. All have watched television together. None knew the United States had a poet laureate selected annually. Students don't seem to enjoy reading, wishing instant gratification and simple and easy solutions. Without seeing the relevance and value of literature to themselves and their lives, it is easy to understand why they are reading less, understanding less, and evaluating nothing.

## Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Much has been written about the importance of developing taste in literature in both direct and oblique ways. Pollard (1978) cites the Rockefeller report's findings that one out of two students in advanced art courses need "aesthetic remediation" (p. 1). She concludes that the "lack of aesthetic understanding limits not only our ability to create art and to appreciate it, but also narrows our vision of ourselves" (p. 20).

Hall (1987), Perrine (1988), and Kennedy (1966) are more specific; they stress the need to help students discern

the differences between good and bad poetry. All three authors devote chapters of their books to setting up criteria for evaluation, print examples of both good and bad poems, and explain at length some of the differences between the two. Their aims are not to impose their own standards on others, but to show their students and readers the importance of establishing standards. Hall explains that there are ways of differentiating between mediocre and good fiction and that this is a noteworthy and important task. He claims that good literature "makes us more sensitive, wiser, broader in understanding and empathy; and bad literature can be viewed as immoral since it reduces and trivializes our world and our sensibilities" (p. 220). Perrine insists that the primary object of a liberal education is "to develop one's ability to judge and to discriminate" (p. 730). Kennedy and Huus (1963) agree with both. So does Hopes (1986) who affirms that by learning the difference between good and mediocre literature, students are encouraged to see the world anew.

Since students are fledgling adults, it is instructive to note that the same problem exists in the older community. Dunning (1977) reports that two former students, now English teachers, had not bought one book of poetry in the 3 years they were out of college. He then spoke to publishers who confessed that they lost money publishing individual poetry books. Other observers note the same dislike or

indifference to literature by the public. Libraries report, Dunning continues, that five award-winning poets' books were never checked out by patrons. Not one of the writer's 100 students had heard of or voluntarily read any poems by our nation's poet laureates. The retired, with more time on their hands, read even less. Smith (1963) examines the reading habits of the retired and cites a study that reports that out of 200 people over 60 who had been questioned, 60% read nothing. In order to evaluate literature intelligently, one needs to read it. Therefore, these findings are disturbing. Gilbert Highet put it succinctly, "Most Americans do not like poetry" (Dunning, 1977, p. 1).

The young fare no better. Couch (1987) cites a senior honors class which hated poetry and considered it useless. This is frightening since that class would have the best readers and is most likely college bound and highly motivated. The writer's creative writing classes were not happy when they were asked to analyze and discuss poems. Thirty out of 50 did not know how to indicate rhyme scheme. They had no idea of the function of syntax and a vague sense of the importance of diction. Poetry is a mystery they do not wish to fathom. When advised that cliches were not to be used, the writer then realized they could not distinguish cliches from fresh imagery. As Broersma (1992) then finds, most students attend literature classes with "established attitudes which range from indifference to open hostility"

(pp. 1-2). How do children spend their time when given choices? Smith (1963) reports that they spend 1 hour a day in voluntary reading and 3 hours a day watching television.

Asked to bring in a poem they liked, 10 could think of none, another 8 brought in a poem studied in class, and 30 brought in poems read as children. The students admitted that they did not like poetry and/or did not understand it. They were at a loss to comprehend why teachers felt Hallmark verse was not good poetry. Summertime affords more time for reading, yet fewer books are read. Out of the 70 students in the writer's advanced placement classes, only 20 voluntarily read a book during the summer months, and not one of the books was a classic. When polled, 50 of the students preferred Stephen King novels to anything they had read in school, including Shakespeare.

Wagner (1985) had students write poetry and evaluate it. They thought it excellent; he believed that it was terrible and was but one more piece of evidence proving how indiscriminate was their taste. The writer had her students compose what they considered to be execrable verse; must of it resembled much of the poetry submitted to the school literary magazine for publication.

Literature touches upon some other possible causes for the lack of discriminating taste among students. These range from an indictment of society to a criticism of teaching methods and of writers whose euphemistic and

preposition driven pronouncements deaden our tastes and our understanding. Schaefer (1977) blames society, namely television, schools, texts, and publishers. They give the public what it wants, but in the lowest possible form. By attempting to please all, good taste and any criteria for excellence are eliminated. Television is mediocre, the quality of children's books has sunk to a new low because they are bowdlerized, condensed, and "full of pallid pap" (p. 45), and comic books are an unaesthetic betrayal of the author's intent. These factors, combined with ungrammatical advertisements, all contribute to students' inability to distinguish the good from the bad (pp. 46-47).

Gannett (1957) comes closest to this point of view, arguing that students hate the classics because they only read sanitized and censored copies of Shakespeare and others. This accusation is not true at the writer's school where many classes use unexpurgated paperbooks. Yet, the dislike is there. The writer does not believe that teaching the porter scene from Macbeth will automatically guarantee her students loving the play. But the writer is aware that worksheets and lower level questions are the standard fare in many classes.

Teachers and/or teaching techniques are blamed for students' dislike of literature and inability to differentiate between the good and the bad by five of them. Couch (1987) inveighs against the way literature is taught

in school. He is appalled by worksheets, biographical material, and the emphasis on literary terms and critical analyses; all these, says he, are taught at the expense of permitting the literature to speak for itself. Teachers do seem to obsess on factual material and in their concern for objective testing lose sight of their goals in teaching appreciation and taste. Students complain about this method, but it is objective, they say, and therefore "fairer." Dunning (1977) concurs with Couch, convinced that the way poetry is taught is the reason students dislike it, thereby making it impossible for them to develop discriminating taste. He states that it is taught as if it has no relevance to their lives, is "esoteric and effeminate and anathema to red-blooded adolescents" (p. 10). Schaefer (1977) takes this idea to an extreme, urging high school teachers to avoid teaching literature. Stay away, says he, because he is convinced that teachers' analysis "kills" (p. 19) and that the students are too immature to deal with abstract concepts. Age may definitely be a factor, as both Broening (1963) and Early (1960) note. Students do need to be capable of abstract thought and mature enough to deal with certain subjects. They also need to be less "me" directed. Grosshuesch (1991) is more brutal, stating that "poetry is considered a form of torture because of the way with which it is approached" (p. 49). Broersma (1992) agrees that the schools do a terrible job; however, he adds

another dimension, personal issues. He claims that students' inner turmoil adversely affects their ability to perform academic tasks. The guidance counselors at the writer's school agree, pointing out that every year the number of students whose parents are divorced increases, the number of appointments students make with guidance to resolve personal crisis are increasing, and the number of troubled and troubling students is multiplying. Ironically, literature can help if only the students would read. It develops moral thinking not by didactism but by raising issues and questions which, if discussed intelligently, can focus on issues important to students and help them resolve conflicts and problems.

Waples (1939) argues that the development of taste depends upon three factors; the writer agrees with his first point only, the need to know the skills of the trade. It is true that knowing the subject is important, and so is writing in order to appreciate writing. However, Waples' second point resonates with elitism. It is delight in the fight with the majority that he says informs taste. This seems specious. The third element, loneliness, is more an effect than a cause. He does urge the teacher to "lure" (p. 421) the students, to inspire them. This practicum will attempt just that.

Closely connected with discriminating reading taste is the ability to write well. It is imperative for students to

do so; if they can recognize when they write well and when they don't, they can transfer this knowledge into recognizing good and poor writing in others. The writer polled all 130 of her students at the beginning of year and found out that 75% of them truly believed that their grades on compositions were based on (a) whether the teacher liked them, (b) whether the teacher agreed with their position/ point of view, or (c) had absolutely no idea why they had received a particular grade. When they first did peer editing, 90% of them looked for spelling and grammatical errors only. Even when they read the same book, they ignored egregious errors. Having no criteria with which to judge writing, they could not comment on each other's form and seemed to think that if a paper was difficult to understand it was deep and good. Orwell (1986) points out the very dangers confronting society when language obfuscates and muddles thought. Because "language corrupts thought and makes the reprehensible possible" (p. 433), he shows that it is absolutely vital that writing be clear and concise. Being inextricably bound with developing good taste, Orwell's principles are good guidelines for reading as well as writing.

## CHAPTER III

## ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

The following goals and outcomes were projected for this practicum:

### Goals and Expectations

The goals of this practicum are to help students develop criteria with which they will evaluate the aesthetic qualities of what they read. This will enable them to discriminate between the creative and the pedestrian, the mediocre and the excellent. Since there is no final arbiter of taste, the expectations are that they become aware that good writing has certain qualities that are not present or visible in poor writing. Although to some extent this can be considered an individual judgement call, there are some standards good readers can agree exist. It is anticipated that the students will be able to recognize the truly great and the truly awful and that they will agree upon the many works that belong in the vast middling range.

### Expected Outcomes

#### Outcome 1

Thirty out of 40 students of those enrolled in the writer's creative writing classes will develop criteria for

judging literature. When asked they will be able to identify a favorite literary work and to list at least three reasons why they liked it. They will support their reasons with specific textual references which are accurate and reveal an understanding of the work.

Outcome 2

Students will be able to distinguish between good and mediocre literature. Children's literature is one area that is measurable and the varying reading skills of the heterogenous classes involved will not affect the testing. Thirty out of 40 students will be able to distinguish which books have been awarded the Newberry prize for children's literature and which ones should not have been awarded the prize. They will give three reasons for their "votes" and support them with textual references. Although the award is given annually to a children's book of outstanding quality, the writer agrees with Zolotow (1982) that the same criteria apply to children's books as to good adult books. Since the students will be working with a different pool of books than those the judges had and do not have to select only one from the pool, their responses may very well be different. What is important is that they develop their own criteria which are supportable, not that they agree with any one person or group.

Outcome 3

A third outcome will be that 30 out of 40 students, when given articles of high and low quality, will be able to successfully distinguish between them. It is necessary that the articles be short and from contemporary magazines, such as New Yorker, Esquire, Vanity Fair, True Romances, and National Enquirer.

Outcome 4

A fourth outcome will be that 30 out of 40 students, when given poems of recognized literary merit together with those with words arbitrarily substituted, will be able to distinguish the "real" poems from those that have been altered (Nathan, 1961).

## Measurement of Outcomes

Students were given several pretests to measure their attitudes towards literature in general since it has been shown that they need to read and understand before they can evaluate. The poetry attitude measurement ascertained their background and attitudes concerning poetry. Although these pertained only peripherally to the goals of the practicum, they did set the stage. It was interesting to see if there were any attitudinal changes (by the group as a whole) at the end of the practicum. Appendices A and B served as a backdrop, giving us an idea of the attitude of the students to the most inaccessible of the literary forms to be

evaluated. It was useful to know if they disliked poetry and if that, therefore, impeded their ability to evaluate.

Journal entries and logs were kept by the students in which they discussed various criteria by which one judges literature. They then wrote outlines and formal papers in which they discussed these criteria as they related to particular works they had studied.

Copies of Newberry award winning books were distributed with the authors' names deleted. Students set up their own criteria for ranking them. Appendix C is a model the writer distributed. She encouraged the students to generate their own. They also used Appendix D for this activity and for outcome 3, recognizing articles from high quality magazines and from low quality ones. Students were also asked to support their assertions with textual evidence. They did so in the form of journals and outlines.

Students were expected to find 75% of the words that had been altered in published and recognized poems.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The literature read indicates that the development of criteria is the first step in helping students begin to evaluate what they read. The writer disagrees completely with Roxburgh (1982) who claims that it is "impossible to define a good children's book" (p. 262). Reasoning that to do so would be limiting the genre rather than encouraging experimentation seems to miss the point. If the criteria are broad and flexible enough, they are not only beneficial but give focus to meaningful dialogue. Definitions do not necessarily set boundaries carved in granite; they simply reflect the taste and tenor of the times and are fluid. One look at the various Newberry winners over the last 30 years verifies that.

The writer discussed the criteria enumerated by experts, the goal being that the students would then be able to generate their own lists. The aim was not to make the teacher's criteria identical with that of the students', for as Dunning (1977) states, this is poor teaching. Rather, as two experts, Streepey (1987) and Dunning (1977) state, students needed to be given practice in acquiring taste.

## Description of Selected Solution

The Newberry Award criteria were the starting point. These included the following elements: (a) interpretation of theme or concept, (b) presentation of information, including accuracy, clarity, and organization, (c) development of plot, (d) delineation of character, (e) delineation of setting, (f) appropriateness of style, and (g) contribution to literature. These were discussed and explained thoroughly. The last element proved to be too difficult and vague. Most students did not consider it important. They also pointed out that they surely were not in a position to comment on this. A heightened awareness of the Newberry criteria was reflected in the students' writing as well as in their literary appreciation.

The American Library Association (1991) adds freshness and imagination to the Newberry criteria. The writer definitely agrees. Students needed to decide just how important originality and playfulness were. Some were comfortable with cliches; but many did not realize they used them. They were reluctant to eliminate them from their own writing.

Orwell (1986) has six principles of writing that the writer has been using for years in her advanced placement classes. There was no reason why these very same principles could not, with slight modifications, be applied to developing taste in literature. Since the students had

access to the essay "Politics and the English Language" in which they are enumerated, a thorough examination of the essay was necessary. Application of its principles was practiced on several short pieces and then the following were included in the classes' master list: (a) keep language simple and audience appropriate, (b) avoid euphemisms and cliches, (c) avoid elitism, (d) avoid lard (extra verbiage), (e) be clear, (f) break any rule rather than write execrably. The aim was for students to incorporate as many of these ideas as they feel are necessary in a list of criteria they believe. Students were given a list of cliches because, as Wagner (1985) suggests, and personal observation confirmed, they really did not know what expressions are cliches and what are not. The students also needed more time in processing and understanding Orwell's essay.

The writer agrees with Dunning (1977), Grosshuesch (1991), and Schaefer (1977) who unequivocally affirm that teachers do make a difference and that they can teach students to evaluate literature. They advise following a few general guidelines and then suggest some activities and strategies, four of which have been modified, added to, and incorporated into this proposal.

Few people learn when bored. Wandering minds cannot appreciate or evaluate literature. Dunning's (1977) advice that the teaching be made entertaining so students will want

to learn was implemented as often as possible. The writer incorporated as many different styles and techniques as possible so students who entered the room would be filled with wonder and not dismay. She did not want to be caught leaving the same house by the same door daily.

A specific attention getter was the following. To encourage students to read in an interesting manner, they were shown a brief clip of Mother Theresa accepting the Nobel prize, a Georgia O'Keefe poster, Julie Harris reading an Emily Dickinson poem, and a Martha Grahame dance clip. From this emanated a discussion of women the teacher admires. Students then listed as many women as they could whom they admired and spent 3 minutes sharing their lists. They were then informed that March was National Women's month and that the New York Times and Barnard College ran an annual essay contest on "The Woman I Admire" (see Appendices E and F). Several of the winning essays from the last 2 years were Xeroxed and shared. Their teacher borrowed this idea and organized a class essay contest on the topic. They wrote about someone they knew, a character in a book, or a historical/contemporary person.

After writing their papers, the students then evaluated three of their classmates' essays, using a teacher generated criteria rubric. Anonymity was guaranteed because numbers identified authors and evaluators. Two days were given to do rewrites at home, and then the papers were handed in.

The students evaluated the evaluators and made some revisions. Two prizes were to be given, one to the best paper and one to the best evaluator. At least 12 papers were outstanding; the same is true of evaluators. It was impossible to reward just one or two people when so many had worked hard. The teacher made a small party for her students and commended them for their fine work. This activity fostered thinking about writing. The writer agreed with Dunning (1977) that better writers do make better readers. The contest served as a formative evaluation of this particular strategy. A comparison was made with a similar writing assignment given to a similar group of students last year, but with three major differences. No videos were shown. No essays were evaluated, and none were revised. Of the papers received last year, 35 of the 50 students used figurative language, but most of it was trite and filled with cliches. Very few contained anecdotal material. Most of the subjects were relatives and friends. This activity also formed the basis for others relating to improving reading and writing, resulting in improved ability to discern the differences between the good and the bad.

Agreeing with Broening (1963) that relevance to students' lives is central to the learning process, Socratic seminars and discussions will include not only higher level questions, but questions dealing with process and evaluation. The reading involved will begin with children's

books which have nostalgic value. Not only is the "child is father to the man" (Wordsworth), but the child will become the father/mother and will need to learn how to determine what their own children (or siblings or nieces and nephews) will read. Macbeth was taught with relevance a key component. Many of the students in the writer's classes are quite ambitious, hoping to attend one of the Ivy League schools or other prestigious ones. How much would they do to assure a place? Connecting their ambition to Macbeth's helped avoid learning in a vacuum which stultifies, bores, and is probably oxymoronic. Therefore, a second strategy to foster better literary appreciation was selecting material with which students could identify and pointing out the similarities and relevancies.

The formative evaluations for this strategy varied somewhat. The students were asked to write a children's book for an elementary school class within the school complex. Knowing the age of the audience, the writer was able to determine whether they had internalized some of the criteria for good children's literature. This alternative assessment was much more meaningful than any multiple-choice test could possibly be (Wiggins, 1992). It was truly authentic.

A third general strategy in improving the evaluative process was in improving comprehension. Four experts--Broening (1963), Huus (1963), Streepey (1987), and Wagner

(1985)--agree that reading and comprehension are vital components of appreciation of literature. The writer agreed. The first time she taught Toni Morrison's Beloved, she was dismayed at the lack of enthusiasm and the negativity of 70% of her students towards the book. Their questions revealed that they had not understood it. This year the novel was taught more carefully with close attention being paid to particular passages.

Macbeth was a difficult play for today's teenagers. One strategy that unlocked the meaning, assured comprehension, and provided for appreciation was performing skits. Groups of two were given index cards with words written on them and informed that they had 5 minutes in which to prepare a skit. Ten of the words were from the play itself and the other five dealt with themes and meanings and included the following four: "fair if foul and foul is fair," "unsex me," greed, and murder. Dictionaries were used and there was no desire for the students to second guess the play. This strategy was to play with words, with meanings, and to pique their curiosity. They then watched the Royal Shakespeare Company's half-hour cartoon of the play. A synopsis of Macbeth through seminar discussion ensued. Several speeches were closely scrutinized for imagery, language, and intent. The formative evaluation was the students' critique of the performance they attended. They were expected to write a review as it might appear in

the newspaper. It was hoped that they would develop their own criteria and make them clear to the reader. They also responded creatively via answering machine messages, T-shirts, shrinklits, and limericks. Creative products, requiring higher level thinking, were surely authentic assessments (Wiggins, 1992).

This solution worked because the students took a field trip, were viscerally and intellectually involved, had the opportunity to interact with the text, and saw the relevance of the themes to themselves and to society. A look at the headlines surrounding the ice skating championship was all that was needed to realize the power and pull of ambition.

Another solution, already partially cited, was the use of skits and improvisations. The writer has used this method over the years, but it was at NEH institutes at Breadloaf and at Simon's Rock that the techniques were further honed. Students reflected on how a particular situation or world view was related to their own. By so doing their involvement in the text deepened. Visualizations, logs, and journal writings were all part of this. Having already used some of these strategies in different contexts, the writer knew her population is not averse to these activities and had become quite comfortable with them.

Being a research and development school, permission for this practicum was not a problem. The writer spoke to both

the principal and the assistant principal and was assured that a brief letter explaining the project was the only requirement. Since the classes involved were electives and the subject of the practicum really related to them, both students and parents were enthusiastic helpmates. The writer was in charge of academic competition for the English department and so was informed of all writing contests. As faculty adviser of the school magazine, she could check that students were submitting work. The last issues of the state's English Journal featured art from her students and this practice was encouraged as the students learned to discriminate between good and bad literature.

## Report of Action Taken

### Weeks 1 and 2

Students brought in 15 to 30 poems by one author. They studied the poems, wrote evaluations of five of them, and emulated the writing style of "their poet" in two pieces. A few unanticipated difficulties arose. They had been asked to bring in a copy of a poem they liked. Many could not, requesting teacher assistance in the library so that they could find poets and poems to use. It came as a surprise to the writer that the students did not have poetry books at home and/or they could not remember any poems they had enjoyed during the last 12 years. Eleven did bring in poems from childhood. They did understand that they needed to find works with somewhat more sophisticated motifs and

language for the intensive work they would be doing during the next few weeks.

After finding poets and poems they could study, the students began filling in the evaluation forms (see Appendix F). Because many had difficulty with the terms and concepts on the form, the teacher suggested they form groups of three and four and work together. They did.

Selected students acted out and discussed the shortest story, "After You, My Dear Alphonse" by Jackson, and the poem, "Six Blind Men and an Elephant." Those who had volunteered to act out these poems practiced and planned for about 15 minutes while the rest of the class worked on their evaluations. This modeling exercise worked.

A discussion of criteria for the presentations ensued. The class suggested that the ones that had been drafted by the instructor for the silent skits they had done a few months earlier be used, but that some modification was necessary. This was a sensible idea and was accepted (see Appendix G).

Students brought in one clear typed or Xeroxed copy of the poem they would be acting out the following week and of two poems that they would be analyzing in depth. The instructor made multiple copies of these so there could be small group discussions.

Weeks 2 and 3

Students acted out their individual poems, having signed up for the day they would perform. This activity took more time than had been anticipated, requiring a week instead of the two days originally planned. The use of props, last minute promptings, and evaluations were quite time consuming. A serendipity was the students' realization that they really had to understand thoroughly the poems before they acted them out.

During the second week, students worked in cooperative groups, evaluating and analyzing the poems they were studying. They helped one another understand the themes or motifs. They handed in a packet of their evaluations of five poems and their two "models" of their poet's work. Although more time consuming than had been originally planned, the students did finish the week thoroughly understanding specific literary terms and devices: diction, syntax, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia, simile, metaphor, and synecdoche. Extending the time spent in class to an additional week was worthwhile. Because of time constraints and lack of student interest, the contest for writing the best model or parody of a poet was canceled.

Week 4

The children's books unit was reintroduced. Earlier in the year the students had shared with one another their favorite children's books. The instructor had read a few

books to them and they had evaluated (see Appendix C). At that time they had not had any sense of criteria and they gave very low ratings to Newberry prize winning authors.

Now, after eagerly awaiting this unit, they worked in groups of four and used evaluation forms that they themselves generated. The writer felt gratified that most groups had many of the same criteria: clarity, simpleness, attractiveness, and interest. The students asked good questions of one another as they filled out the forms. They wondered about he age of the audience, if the pictures were presentational and meaningful, if the vocabulary was too difficult, and if there was a moral. They seemed to prefer books which were didactic and used very elementary words. They argued about what might be relevant or appropriate material. The class was divided concerning topics, such as death, abortion, and adoption. Some felt that children would be frightened and should not be exposed to these topics. Others felt that books would be an excellent way to teach and prepare them for certain eventualities.

The writer was pleased that these dialogues occurred. She reminded the students that they would be writing and illustrating their own books soon and needed to begin thinking of ideas. Books written by students in previous years were shared, as were contemporary professional ones. The discussion was informal and relaxed. Emphasis was on analysis of what worked rather than an evaluation.

Week 5

The one week unit on "Woman I Admire" (details in the body of practicum) worked out extraordinarily well. The writer showed the classes videos of famous women whom she admired and disseminated copies of high school students' essays which had been published in The New York Times. Only a few students had difficulty thinking of a person; private lunchtime conferences solved these problems. The essays were written and then cooperative groups read and commented, anonymously, on them. Each essay was read by three different groups who did not see the comments of the other readers. The students were given four days (instead of the original two days) to rewrite their essays and handed in a packet which contained one copy of the original, the rewrite, readers' comments, and comments by them about their readers. The students needed to explain why they did or did not make changes and how the process did or did not help them.

Week 6

The miniShakespearean unit scheduled for two weeks lasted only one week. There was much resistance to it and too many insurmountable obstacles. Only 20 of the 40 students chose to attend the performance of Macbeth, therefore, making it impossible for all of them to write about their experience. The students did act out some lines from the play and also performed skits dealing with the

themes similar to those in the play. They watched a 30-minute cartoon video produced by the British Royal Shakespeare Company. They learned about the play, but there was not as much concentration and study of the language as had been originally intended.

Week 7

Students listened to the Bridges of Madison County. Although 2 weeks were planned for this, the writer only played the tape for 3 days. The students beseeched her not to "torture them further" and she acceded.

Chopin's "Story of an Hour" was read silently. Students formed groups and were given a list of activities, a different one highlighted for each group. The activities included: modern skit using theme of story, conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Mallard, conversation between Mrs. Mallard and friend, Enquirer article. After watching the presentations, there was a discussion of the irony in the tale and of Chopin and her time.

Week 8

The students wrote execrable prose and poetry. The pieces were mercifully short and quite terrible. The students listed the following as techniques they had used to ensure that the poems would be as terrible as possible: inclusion of many cliches, the use of inappropriate and inadequate language, the employment of many unnecessary

prepositional phrases, the use of 10 words when one would do, repetitiveness, inappropriate language for the theme or narrative, and predictability.

The students read and evaluated (using Appendix D) three short stories by Marquez and listened to a tape of two stories by O'Brien. The writer thought it would be interesting to have them evaluate a master of magical realism and a first-class realism craftsman.

Weeks 9 and 10

Students wrote college essays and critiqued one another's. They formed small groups of no more than three and the first readings responded to teacher generated questions (see Appendix H). The next reading, also by a group, commented on the initial remarks and then reacted to the essay. The third reading was by individuals, and no specific instructions were given. Comments were required, but that was the sole proviso. This project was made possible by the curtailing of the original plans concerning Shakespeare and Waller.

Weeks 11 and 12

Students wrote their own children's book, working alone or with one partner. Some began immediately. Others formed groups and brainstormed. After 2 days, they shared their progress with the class. A group of six joined the instructor in further brainstorming, and eventually everyone

knew what she would be doing. The students were encouraged to cooperate and work with one another, especially if they felt their artistic talents inadequate. They were also encouraged to use stick figures, to cut out pictures, to be abstract, or to use photographs.

In order to read to students at an adjoining school, specific arrangements had to be made with teachers. Since many students had attended those schools, they asked their former elementary school teachers for permission to read in their classes. Others had connections in private schools, and a few went to their own neighborhood schools. The teacher had to arrange for permission from administration and then circulate and collect field trip forms and insurance waiver forms. Two students in each class volunteered to coordinate the visits. They contacted the teachers to find out what hours were available. After checking with the students to find out the age level of the books they were writing, they arranged visits to the younger children by groups of five to eight. To verify that the reading occurred, students brought back notes from the elementary school teachers.

Much of the writing and drawing for this project was done at home. Accordingly, the students evaluated two prose pieces and three poems written by their peers. The ensuing discussion, informal in tone, became heated at times. Often the participants backed their views with relevant quotes

from the works. The students anonymously wrote informal pieces about what worked, what should be kept, and what should be changed, and how.

# CHAPTER V

# RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Results

The problem in the writer's school was that students did not distinguish good from bad literature. They could not give any specific reasons for liking or disliking a literary work. To solve this problem, the writer discussed with the class the criteria for awarding literary prizes and helped the students generate an evaluation sheet they could use. Encouraging individuals to formulate their own criteria for judging literary works, she made certain that they thoroughly understood all the poems and prose pieces they were asked to evaluate. She used only literary works which were relevant to their lives. Class activities included seminar discussions, skits, and improvisations to unlock the meaning of the texts and to thoroughly explore all interpretations.

### Outcome 1

The first anticipated outcome was that 30 out of 40 students of those enrolled in the writer's creative writing classes will develop criteria for judging literature. When asked they will be able to identify a favorite literary work

and to list at least three reasons why they like it. They will support their reasons with specific textual references which are accurate and reveal an understanding of the work. This outcome was achieved. However, the writer changed "favorite literary work" to "nationally recognized literary work" because she wanted the class to engage in various reading and acting activities. Since these were to be group activities that would provide necessary skills, training, and practice to all, commonality of materials was mandatory. This is an extension of Sizer's (1984) and Tyler's (1949) beliefs that relaxed discussions and open-ended questions are most conducive to thinking and learning.

Students rated seven stories of recognized literary value and one published student's story in prose on a scale of 9 (high) to 1 (low) (see Table 1). If they thought the piece had literary merit, they scored it 5 or higher; if not, it was scored 4 or lower. They also filled out an evaluation form (see Appendix D) which indicated the works' specific strengths or weaknesses.

Table 1

Number of Students Evaluating Literary Works on a Scale of 9 (High) to 1 (Low)

| Literary Work | High 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Low 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chopin - "Story of an Hour" | 25 | 5 | 5 | - | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | - |
| O'Brien - "Things They Carried" | 22 | 12 | 4 | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| - "Ambush" | 24 | 10 | 3 | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| Marquez - "Tramontana" | 12 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 1 | - | - | - |
| - "Miss Forbes's Summer of Happiness" | 7 | 10 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 3 | - | - | - |
| - "Light is Like Water" | 10 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 5 | 4 | - | - | - |
| New Yorker Story | 8 | 5 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Student Prose | 20 | 7 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 | - | - |

* Total number of students = 40

Outcome 2

Children's literature is one area that is measurable and the varying reading skills of the heterogeneous classes involved will not affect the testing. Thirty out of 40 students will be able to distinguish which books have been awarded the Newberry prize for children's literature and which ones should have been awarded the prize. They will give three reasons for their "votes" and support them with textual references. Although the award is given annually to a children's book of outstanding quality, the writer agrees

with Zolotow (1982) that the same criteria apply to children's books as to good adult books. Since the students will be working with a different pool of books than those the judges had and do not have to select only one from the pool, their responses may very well be different. What is important is that they develop their own criteria which are supportable, not that they agree with any one person or group. This outcome was achieved.

As Table 2 indicates, six professional children's books received high ratings. The scale of 1-5 worked well with these.

Table 2

Number of Students Evaluating Award Winning Children's Books on a Scale of 5 (High) to 1 (Low)

| Award Winning Children's Books | High 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | Low 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the Night Kitchen | 3 | 5 | 9 | 18 | 5 |
| Goodnight, Moon | 13 | 2 | 10 | 7 | 8 |
| Crow Boy | 18 | 22 | - | - | - |
| Chicken Soup With Rice | 15 | 7 | 3 | 8 | 7 |

* Total Number of Students = 40

Outcome 3

A third outcome projected was that 30 out of 40 students, when given articles of high and low quality, will be able to successfully distinguish between them. It is

necessary that the articles be short and from contemporary magazines, such as New Yorker, Esquire, Vanity Fair, True Romances, and National Enquirer. This outcome as originally stated was not achieved because the teacher ran out of time to disseminate these articles. But the students were able to distinguish good from bad prose writing of their peers. They did this 80% of the time. In addition, 38 out of 40 were also able to recognize poor writing by a best selling author.

Outcome 4

A fourth outcome was that 30 out of 40 students, when given poems of recognized literary merit together with those with words arbitrarily substituted, would be able to distinguish the "real" poems from those that had been altered. This outcome was not achieved as stated.

## Discussion

Outcome 1

Broening (1963) and Streepey (1987) had stressed the importance of comprehension to the appreciation of literature, noting that one does not like what is not understood. The writer chose "Story of an Hour" which she knew from past experience was not easily grasped by high school students. She distributed copies of it, had the students read the piece silently, and then asked them to form groups. The groups were given a list of activities and

were responsible for doing the one that was highlighted on their sheet. Ten minutes of preparation time was allotted. The teacher circulated around the room while the groups were analyzing the story and preparing their skits. In a few instances she clarified some misreading. More important, the students helped each other. Most groups had at least one person who realized that the protagonist's death and the doctor's words were ironic; they were able to pinpoint where in the text this became apparent.

The students signed up on the board for their order of presentation. One of the funniest skits was a discussion between Mrs. Mallard and a friend. The former kept saying, "I do whatever he likes" and "I would never argue with him." Yet another had Mrs. Mallard at the psychiatrist's office, declaring, "I want to be free! I want to be free!". The National Enquirer article proposed that extraterrestrial aliens had spirited her away so they could dissect "the perfect wife." This activity epitomized one of Sizer's (1984) precepts that the student should be the worker.

Only after a thorough analysis of the story and a short biographical sketch about the author and her times were the students asked to evaluate the work. By then they had all understood it. The results were interesting. Thirty-two believed it was good literature, but only 21 really liked it. One student explained: "It's like spinach. It's good for you, but you don't necessarily like it." The writer

believes Tyler (1949) was right in stating that they learn best from one another. The very ambiguity of the ending was one of the reasons all gave for considering it a good story. Second, most agreed that nothing in the story was superfluous or unnecessary. Third, the language, though somewhat sophisticated for a few, was considered appropriate. One student compared its ending to O'Henry's while another thought the ending predictable. It is important to note how critical understanding the text was to appreciating its beauty.

Marquez's stories were chosen for several reasons. Many of the students had read his Chronicles of a Death Foretold and so were somewhat familiar with magical realism. Many students were aware of stream of consciousness writing and liked it, others enjoyed phantasmagoric tales. Therefore, although the stories were challenging, they would probably be enjoyed. The students read them silently and had three activities to perform, alone. Each decided which one to do for each story. Most decided to react creatively to "Tramontana," creating T-shirts and stickers. Many asked higher level thinking questions about "Miss Forbes's Summer of Happiness" because they did not readily understand it. The writer stressed that they did not need to know the answers. Encouraging students to ask questions, both open-ended and textual driven ones, is considered sound pedagogical practice (Wiggins, 1992).

Interestingly, over 30 of the 40 liked Marquez's work, even though they were not sure what two of the stories meant. This might seem to contradict Wagner (1985) and Huus (1963) who say understanding is vital. The writer believes that the students had developed sufficient skills to recognize good writing, even if themes were not completely clear to them. They also knew they could ask questions later and that they would enjoy exploring various interpretations. Seeming contradictions would not be resolved, but that, too, could be fun. Not concerned about being right or wrong, they could concentrate on the writing and on their visceral reactions. They also were discovering that not all books can be inhaled or read rapidly and thoughtlessly. In this regard, perhaps they should only have been given two stories to read so they would have had paid closer attention to the details. But their reactions indicate they were becoming good, discriminating readers.

O'Brien's stories of the Vietnam War were much more easily understood. Eleventh graders had been studying Vietnam in history class and were able to talk about the war, its causes, and its effects on the nation. After several of them shared their expertise, the class quietly listened to O'Brien read "The Things They Carried"; this was a passive activity. A Socratic discussion followed. As Sizer (1984) notes, this encourages thinking. All were

impressed with O'Brien's graphic details. The ending eluded some of them and the disadvantage of not having the text to refer to was discussed. The writer suggested that the very point of the story was its ambiguity. She is also aware that one item listed on the evaluation, clarity (Appendix D), should be eliminated since oxymorons, paradoxes, and ambiguities are often an author's basic tools of the trade. She also stressed that she deliberately used materials that were intricate and not easily understood. If her students understood everything they read without her help, she would be unemployed.

New Yorkers were distributed and the students were asked to read a short story in the magazine. Thirty-three out of 40 thought it was excellent. Interestingly, disagreement centered on identical points. Some considered the dialogue between father and son unrealistic; others thought its tone captured the rhythms and sense of many such dialogues. A few felt the ending shocking; others felt it was predictable. One boy "hated it" for its Christian symbolism, declaring it was the most egregious piece of writing he had read all year. Most students applauded the symbolism (once they understood it) and felt it contributed to the meaning of the story. That the students were able to cite textual evidence for their opinions and were able to discuss writing techniques more than plot indicates their success in developing criteria for literature. The writer

is much encouraged by her students' strong arguments and vehement opinions. This particular piece touched them; no person was indifferent to it. Being relevant, it moved them. Dunning (1977) did write that students will appreciate literature if these factors are present.

The students were given a story which won first place in a newspaper sponsored state contest. They knew it had been written by a teenager. They became piranha. Although more than 30 thought it was good, the class had serious misgivings about it. Some felt the language was not sophisticated enough. The narrator's voice was unclear to them. Some thought the story "ordinary." The writer had found this happened quite frequently. She wonders if it is natural for them to swing in extremes as they develop discriminating taste. She also suggests that a natural, envy-laden competitive quality awakens when they realize it is a teenager's work they are reading. Or it may be the price that has to be paid for developing discerning taste. Adults are taught to reward what the child does well; they are being taught to look for both good and bad qualities. They can't be faulted for finding the later.

Outcome 2

The teacher read several books to the students, not telling them who the authors were. Thirty out of 40 agreed that Chicken Soup With Rice should be awarded a Newberry prize, which it had. They were perceptive and thoughtful in

their comments. Those who believed it should not be given a prize had good reasons: they found it too repetitive, they were looking for a moral, and they found it slight. Those who believed it deserved an award recognized its light touch, its repetitiveness they appreciated and considered an asset, and they thought it was poking fun at an overprotective mother. Crow Boy was considered good literature by 38 out of 40 students. This prize winning sensitive story touched all of them. Dunning (1977) and Broening (1963) insist that the main reason students do not like literature is because of its lack of relevance to their lives. The classes' reaction to Crow Boy certainly corroborates their thesis. The students all related to the tale. Its simplicity touched them, and they felt the happy ending appropriate. The writer saw a real sensitivity to good literature developing.

Since the Shakespearean unit and the Waller unit had been shortened, the writer was able to devote 2 weeks to helping her classes write and design children's books to read to classes at an adjoining elementary school. Her students were told they could work alone or in groups of no more than two. The best books would be awarded prizes. Although the latter was appreciated, it really was not necessary. The reinforcement from reading to the little ones was sufficiently immediate and powerful. Atwell (1987) speaks of the importance of audience to writing.

Some students began work at once, knowing just what they wanted to do. One girl went home and that night wrote a story imitating the Berenson Bears series, closely looking at rhyme and meter (the first few weeks had paid off). She then became an author in search of an illustrator. She found one in another class and they collaborated. The artist could not draw turtles, the original "detective" in the story, so the animals became dinosaurs. Another student did abstract water colors with very simple language. A few knew not what to do. They brainstormed together. Atwell (1987) writes glowingly of this process, and the writer agrees that it works well. Some approached the writer, clueless. About a half hour was spent tossing around ideas. The students were encouraged to speak to one another, to share ideas, to cooperate. They did. Everyone wrote a book. When the books were finished, the media center personnel agreed to help the students laminate and bind them. The books could then be handled more easily.

Groups were formed to read and evaluate them. Each group decided upon its own criteria and then incorporated them into their evaluations. One hundred percent of the students had five acceptable criteria which they could justify. These included a few which had not been previously mentioned: ease with which children could follow the story, the use of primary colors so all the children could see the pictures, and neatness. Several students created 3-D books,

attaching glue, combs, hair, material, etc. to their pages. One book was deemed the funniest for the line, "He changed his clothes." The students had noticed that in many professional books they had seen the characters wore the same clothes throughout. The students were amazed at some of the art work and imagination of their peers.

A few books were criticized, legitimately, for several reasons. One was a rhyming book which had egregious spelling errors and used black slang which the readers felt would give the child the wrong message. The students really do believe that books should teach morals and set good examples of speech. Nor was the book aesthetically pleasing, they said. Two illustrators used coloring books for pictures. The readers were dismayed at their lack of originality and what they perceived as plagiarism. They pointed to other books that creatively dealt with lack of artistic talent. One person had used geometric shapes as "persona," another used stick figures, a third cut out pictures and gave credit to the illustrators, a fourth used photographs, and a fifth used material from a party store. One or two books were put together carelessly. One book was severely criticized for its sloppiness and another for its shallowness.

These comments differed substantially from the peer evaluations at the beginning of the year. The students didn't want to comment. When they did, they said, "It's

interesting," or "I liked it." They did not know what else to write. Now that they were given practice in acquiring taste, as Streepey (1987) and Dunning (1977) suggest, they were able to do so. Atwell (1987) also advocates peer editing groups and emphasizes the training they must receive to perform well. The writer agrees that the effort was worthwhile and is quite pleased at the internalization of the material she had been teaching. So many books were excellent that nine prizes were distributed. Wiggins (1992) said that alternative assessments are often much more accurate than tests in assessing mastery of skills. This project epitomizes the success and value of product oriented assessment.

Of the 40 books completed, only five were truly substandard, and there were mitigating circumstances for two of these. There are some changes that need to be incorporated the next time. For one, the writer did not check the grammar or spelling prior to the books being put together and laminated. This was definitely a mistake. Once the books were laminated it was too late. Next year she probably will have cooperative groups do this and then she will check them. Second, some decisions need to be made on the use of colloquialisms; the class should discuss the implications and desirability of using them. Third, every book was in good taste. This may have been beginner's luck. She will definitely have to check this, too, while looking

at spelling and grammar. Her personal children's library is growing, and she intends to share the books with her students. Next year a week will be set aside for just browsing through children's books.

All agreed that the apogee of this project was going to the adjacent elementary school and reading the books to children. "The kids loved my book." "They laughed." "They were quiet and listened." "They asked me questions." To write for an audience, to get immediate feedback, and to know from the applause that the work was enjoyed: those were the benefits. The writer received lovely notes from the teachers visited. All they had been asked to do was to verify that the students had read to their classes. The notes attested to the pleasure given: "The class loved the story of the green pea," "My students were enraptured by the thought of purple bacon on lavender toast," "Thank you. Please visit us again." The project will be expanded next year since it worked so well. The writer's colleague suggested a "buddy" system and she will try it. Her students will "adopt" a little one and write a book just for that person. They will then visit once every 2 months and read and talk about books and writing with their buddies.

Outcome 3

The miniShakespearean unit scheduled for 2 weeks lasted only one week and had mixed results. Students were to attend a Shakespearean play and write about their

experiences. Obstacle number 1 was the other teachers. Many refused to permit their students to attend the performance, citing tests and other concerns. Had the writer anticipated this, she would have made the trip mandatory rather than optional. Second, students really did not want to go. One might say that this validates the purpose of the practicum: they do not appreciate the value of literature. Third, because this was a semiprofessional performance, and free, the writer was not sure of its quality and therefore, reluctant to require attendance. Accordingly, only 20 of the 40 students attended the performance and two of the activities planned had to be eliminated. The students could not write about what they had not seen, nor could they write a good play using Shakespearean language and themes.

Those who attended realized that the stage did not bring the page alive. They perceptively commented on the inadequacies of the performance. All the students praised the 30-minute cartoon version of Macbeth they had seen, believing its visual and technical effects were outstanding. They believed they learned much about the dark themes and tones of the play from the colors and costumes in the video.

One miniproject consisted of the students writing an essay, "A Woman I Admire." The students were quite critical of this year's winners of the New York City wide contest, published in the New York Times. The writer was surprised

by the vehemence with which some of her students ridiculed the feelings of love and admiration expressed in the essays, calling them "sentimental" and "phony" and an appeal to "ad misericordiam." Some students found much fault with the personal anecdotal ones, stating they were "not different" and "too predictable." Perhaps too much stress has been placed on originality. The writer was also disappointed at her students' unwillingness to credit others for the use of concrete detail and dialogue. She was pleased at their recoiling from the cliches and hackneyed phrases. The students were heeding Orwell's (1986) advise.

Peer editing of one another's papers worked much better than at the beginning of the year. Practice helped. The students, polled, stated they preferred working in groups, which were selected by the instructor. She strove for heterogeneity (Sizer, 1984) and balance. She wanted the student with the critical eye to work with one who tended to be a cheerleader seeing only the good in what was written. She wanted the weaker writer to work with the stronger one, the quiet person to work with another quiet person so as not to be intimidated. Knowing the students well, she also avoided cliques, but made sure the student who was difficult to work with had a genial partner. Each group read three papers and were given the option of writing either their student numbers or names on the paper. The teacher wanted some accountability if there was a problem. Most students

chose to remain anonymous critics; the really strong, opinionated ones did not.

The reaction to the critiques was mainly favorable, but that does not mean tearless. One girl was insulted. She had written about herself and one group of readers thought she was conceited. Several students had totally contradictory comments. "Your introduction was catchy and appealing." "Your introduction was boring." "The details added to the story." "The details detracted from the essay." In these cases they had several choices. One, the instructor would work with them during lunch. Two, they could get advice from seniors who edited the school's literary magazine. Three, they could play Solomon and use their own judgement. They learned how writing can generate different reactions. Another difficulty encountered by one student was his innumerable grammatical errors. His readers were blunt and direct, "We cannot read this piece because the grammar and spelling are so bad that it is incomprehensible." This has been a common error of his all year; one wonders if peer reaction affected him.

Two papers presented dilemmas. One group felt it was prejudiced against whites and they were offended. With the author's permission, the paper was discussed with the class. The author idealized black women, but he did not denigrate whites. The readers needed to learn that not only were they being too sensitive, but that truth, beauty, and prejudice

are all in the eyes of the beholder. The essay was submitted to a contest in which it placed third, overall, vindicating the writer. The other paper was misread by two groups who considered it offensive, in bad taste, and insulting. It was not. It was a parody on the assignment and on the concept itself, very funny, satirical, and ironic. The teacher gave it 100, arbitrarily settling the dispute.

A few essays were brought to the teacher's attention as being excellent and read to the class. One was page 257 of an autobiography. The student's page was the index at the end of his book which included entries as "Nobel Prize acceptance speech, incarceration, murder trial, Spinoza, Dostoyevsky, Feynman, and Thoreau." We were intrigued. Another essay was a humorous obituary. A third was a list of remembrances: Remember when: "When someone said 'smoke a bowl' and you thought it was cereal/when driving meant a go cart/when sex still gave a girl a reputation/when a joint was no longer part of your body/and . . . when there weren't so many things to remember." This was published in the school's literary magazine because it was so good. A fourth explained the differences between the United States and the country from which the boy had emigrated. To have students recognize and validate one another's good writing by asking they be read to the class was one of the highlights of this practicum. Atwell (1987) extols peer readings, "A sense of

audience - the knowledge that someone will read what they have written - is crucial to young writers. Kids write better when they know that people they care about will read their texts" (p. 265). She insists, rightly, that reading and writing are intricately and inextricably interwoven. We read other people's writing; how exciting for the students when theirs is read and analyzed.

The writer had her students comment on peer editing at the end of the year. "I wasted hours trying to find out what the reader could possibly have interpreted as sexual images." "I hadn't realized how I strayed from my point and altered by paper accordingly." "The observations were right on target, but I wish I was told how to reword it." "I agreed with my readers about my introduction. I didn't like it either." "I was told that I digressed too much and had too much lard. How true." Being able to recognize good writing is one step in the process of appreciating good literature, and the peer editing worked.

The students listened to a tape. They had been told, on the first day, that this book had been on the best seller list for 95 weeks. They were instructed to take careful notes of the author's rhetorical style. On the first day, a few students laughed; the others listened intently and took copious notes. On the second day, more laughed, possibly because they had spoken to the few who had done so the previous day. By the end of that hour the students spoke

up, asking about Waller's stilted language, repetitiveness, and use of cliches. On the third day, the students entered the room and begged the writer not to torture them for the entire period by making them listen to the tape.

She must admit that the experiment is somewhat flawed. She inadvertently may have tainted it by laughing as the students were listening . . . this may have influenced them. Even more convincing was the contempt the really good students had for the work, and the willingness and speed with which they shared their thoughts and feelings.

The writer is ecstatic though. The students do recognize execrably prose. This can be seen in the contest she sponsored--a worse prose and poetry contest. Most of the poems were about death. They were awful. Fortunately, they were short. "In the hospital you lay/I sit and cry and I visit you each day/There is no hope, I hear them say." The author commented on her lack of rhythm and her happy words on such a sad subject. Another entry: "He's dead/He is lying in a coffin bed? He isn't red. He is blue/Me too." Then we have the unforgettable imagery of, "I am merely a quivering puddle of amorous Yorkshire pudding waiting for your marble hands . . . You are nothing more than a biscuit-bodied woman tenuously stuffed into a cosmic halter top and pea-soup green stretch pants." Another poem about the death of a bug elicited the comment, "It is sing-song, with no point, cheesy rhymes, and an attempt to make serious a

trivial idea." Some purple prose selections included, "homo sapiens running rampid through the town, like rats searching for a decaying, disgusting, blood-dripping, dead dog" and "throngs of feral, perfidious, belligerent pink-skins combed the verdant, pastoral countryside, seizing hapless men and women of hue whose only malfeasance was the swarthy tint of their flesh." The students may not always be ready or willing to appreciate good literature, but they are certainly becoming aware of bad literature. Once again authentic assessment proved to be the best and most accurate evaluation tool for the writer.

Outcome 4

The fourth outcome was not achieved as stated. Possible reasons for the failure include the following.

The teacher had found, to her dismay, and as has been already recounted, that the students were simply too unfamiliar with poetry to even attempt to work on this skill. After the first few weeks of intensive work on poetry, she reluctantly dropped it from the curriculum. Although the research and initial surveys had indicated that students had not read much poetry but, the writer thought, since this was a creative writing class, that they would have a few favorite poems or have one poet they admired. She was wrong. Their knowledge of poetry was almost negligible and the first 2 weeks of implementing this practicum were filled with revelations. Almost 15% of the

students wanted to do Silverstein. Because his intended audience is much younger, and to avoid repetition and copying, the writer permitted only a few of her students to work on his poems.

Implementing Couch's (1987) ideas that teaching should be interesting, Huus' (1963) admonition that they understand the work, and Broening's (1963) dictum that it be relevant, volunteers prepared and presented skits on "After you, Alphonse" and "Six Blind Men and an Elephant." The class thoroughly enjoyed the performances. The groups had been given very few parameters; they could use whatever props and place the pieces in whatever setting they wished. They simply needed to be faithful to the basic themes. The results were hilarious. One group decided to switch roles so that Alphonse became the white child. They did much exaggerated bowing and the mom did a great job of being agitated. The class had no difficulty perceiving the latent prejudice Jackson so deftly assailed. The poetry performance also worked well; its more obvious moral message appreciated. Two students wrapped themselves in sheets to portray the elephant using a rope for a trunk. From these scenes the students understood more readily how they were to act out their poems.

The second surprise occurred when students began filling out the evaluation forms on the poems (see

Appendix F). In writing out the rhyme scheme, one student asked a group member what letter to use after "z." The writer had not anticipated that high school students had not had the experience of writing down rhyme schemes or patterns. Rhythm was not as great a problem; students could divide words into syllables. Syntax and diction required much explanation. The writer spent a day doing so; she should have taken more time. The students had great difficulty imitating the style of their poets; the fault lies with the teaching. More time was definitely needed to teach some fundamental of poetry and to acquaint the students with more poems. More practice should have been given. The students should also have seen more models--imitations written by other students in previous years.

They thought the work had been tedious, frustrating, laborious, and boring. The writer believes that part of the problem may be the poems they selected. They really were not interested in them. Part of the problem may be that they are not ready to do so much analysis in an elective course. She also thinks that doing one or two poems at a time would have been sufficient. She had required too many poems in too short a space of time. She would also incorporate a discussion of tone and add it to the evaluation sheet. The writer still prefers the students to feel overworked than underwhelmed.

There was to have been a contest to determine who had written the best parody or imitation. The students voted to cancel this because very few were proud of their work. Too much had been asked of them in too short a space of time. Considering the research data which indicated that students do not read much poetry, this project was too ambitious. They need much more exposure to poetry before they can imitate or satirize it well. Only 20 out of 40 liked three poems written by teenagers that had received accolades and awards from teachers.

The poem which won first prize in a county poetry contest received a split vote; half the class liked it, the other half did not. "Boarding Up," a top winner in the national Scholastic Magazine contest (out of several thousand entries) was both misunderstood and not appreciated by half the students. Dunning (1977) and Couch (1987) had said that students don't read poetry, and therefore don't like it.

About one-third of the time into the practicum implementation, the writer initiated a school-wide project, with the journalism/yearbook teacher. At a conference the two of them had attended, they realized they had common goals. The yearbook advisor wished to disseminate information to the students on relevant topics. The writer wanted to encourage the students to submit entries to the school's literary magazine. She had become aware of how

little poetry was being read, no less written, and wanted to expose the students to relevant, interesting, short poems written by their peers. The two teachers came up with the idea of a self-supporting weekly newsletter. A student who both had in their classes suggested a name, sold ads, and received bids for printing. A schedule for printing and dissemination to the student body was established. The project was launched.

Six issues have been distributed this year. One side of the 8 1/2" x 11" sheet had news, the other poetry, prose, and art. The response from both faculty and students has been very positive. Students' poems are being published and they feel good about it. More and more students are reading each other's works and are submitting pieces to the staff. The teachers involved will continue this project next year. The class has become, as Sprague (1993) notes, "product driven, writing and publishing newspapers and performing plays" (p. 68).

## Recommendations

The writer would recommend the following:

1. The writer suggests using material students are interested in, that is relevant to them, and that they can understand. She would use short prose pieces and only gradually introduce poetry. She suggests activities be fun and that the class atmosphere be accepting and nonthreatening.

2. The writer will definitely continue to help students develop discriminating taste and differentiate between what they like and what is good. Hopefully more good literature will be liked.

3. The writer will be alert for any new material, research, and literature which relates to this topic. She will continue to search for worthwhile literature her students can appreciate and enjoy. Contemporary writing should be included.

4. Products and discussion groups were the best indicators of the success of this project and will be incorporated into other studies when possible and appropriate.

## Dissemination

At a workshop in the fall the writer will present her thoughts and findings to colleagues in her department. She will select portions of it to submit to The Journal of Children's Literature.

She will talk to several cluster members with the hopes of getting together with them presenting a workshop for a county, state, regional, or national conference.

## REFERENCES


Atwell, N. (1987). In the middle: Writing, reading, and learning with adolescents. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton Cook Publishers.

Broening, A. M. (1963). Development of taste in literature in the senior high school. In N. B. Smith (Ed.), Development of taste in literature (pp. 37-51). Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Broersma, D. H. (1992). The appreciation gap: Examining student attitudes to classroom literature (Report No. CS 213 281). Unpublished manuscript. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 344 226)

Couch, L. L. (1987). "So much depends"... on how you begin: A poetry lesson. English Journal, 76(7), 29-35.

Dunning, S. (1977). Teaching literature to adolescents. Glenville, IL: Scott Foresman & Company.

Early, M. J. (1960). Stages of growth in literary appreciation. English Journal, 49(7), 164-167.

Gannett, L. (1957). Why do they 'hate' the classics? Child Study, 34, 16-17.

Grosshuesch, R. (1991). Integrating the arts into the study of poetry: Why and how (Report No. CS 213 094). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 339 042)

Hall, D. (1987). To read literature: Fiction, poetry, drama. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc.

Hopes, D. B. (1986). The boy stood on the burning deck: Knowing the mediocre and teaching the good. English Journal, 75(7), 43-45.

Huus, H. (1963). Development of taste in literature in elementary grades. Development of taste in literature. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kennedy, X. J. (1966). An introduction to poetry. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.

Nathan, N. (1961). Judging poetry. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Orwell, G. (1986). Politics and the English language. In J. R. McCuen & A. Winker (Eds.), Readings for writers (pp. 432-442). New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch.

Perrine, L. (1988). Literature: Structure, sound, sense. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch.

Pollard, B. (1978). The interrelationship of the arts: A course in aesthetic criticism and appreciation (CYC Report No. SO 018 504). New York: Board of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 289 770)

Roxburgh, S. (1982, Fall). A task doomed. Theory Into Practice, 21, 262.

Schaefer, J. (1977). If stories must be taught. In S. Dunning (Ed.), Teaching literature to adolescents: Short stories (pp. 45-78). Glenville, IL: Scott Foresman & Co.

Sizer, T. R. (1984). Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Smith, N. S. (1963). Why should we develop taste in literature? Development of taste in literature. Champaign, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Sprague, M. M. (1993). From newspapers to circuses: The benefits of production-driven learning. Educational Leadership, 50(7), 68-70.

Streepey, J. S. (1987). Overcoming the I-don't -know-what-I-like-syndrome. English Journal, 77(2), 58-61.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wagner, M. (1985). Preventive maintenance: Establishing a climate for poetry (CYC Report No. CS 209 630). Lee's Summit, MO: Association of Teachers of English. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 267 441)

Waples, D. (1939, October). On developing taste in reading. Harvard Educational Review, 4, 413-423.

Wiggins, G. (1992). Creating tests worth taking. Educational Leadership, 49(8), 26-34.

Zolotow, C. (1982, Fall). Defining a good children's book. Theory Into Practice, 214, 262-267.

# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## A SCALE TO MEASURE ATTITUDE TOWARD POETRY

# APPENDIX A

## A SCALE TO MEASURE ATTITUDE TOWARD POETRY

Name (optional) _____

Age _____ Grade _____

The following is a list of statements about poetry. Put a plus sign before each statement with which you agree at the left of the statement. Your score will not affect your grade in any course.

____ 1. Poetry has an irresistible attraction for me.

____ 2. Poetry is profitable to everyone who reads it.

____ 3. Any student who reads poems is bound to be benefitted.

____ 4. I am willing to spend my time reading poetry.

____ 5. Reading poetry is a good pastime.

____ 6. I don't believe poetry will do anybody any harm.

____ 7. I haven't any definite like or dislike for poetry.

____ 8. Poetry will benefit only the brighter students.

____ 9. My parents never read or studied poems so I see no merit in it.

____ 10. I am not interested in poetry.

____ 11. This subject reminds me of Shakespeare's play, Much Ado About Nothing.

____ 12. I would not advise anyone to read poems.

____ 13. Reading poetry is a waste of time.

____ 14. I look forward to poetry with horror.

APPENDIX B

READING - WRITING SURVEY

## APPENDIX B

## READING - WRITING SURVEY

1. How many magazines does your family receive/read a month? ____
2. About how many magazines do you read a month? ____
3. List your favorite magazines: _____

_____

_____

4. What books have you enjoyed reading these past 2 years?_____

_____

_____

5. What books have you disliked reading during the past 2 years? _____

_____

_____

Please check the appropriate column:

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Not Sure | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6. Shakespeare is a great author. | | | | | |
| 7. I love seeing/reading Shakespeare. | | | | | |
| 8. I like Hallmark cards. | | | | | |
| 9. I think Hallmark cards are of good quality. | | | | | |
| 10. I think poetry should be easy to understand. | | | | | |
| 11. I think good poetry and prose should be didactic. | | | | | |

## APPENDIX B

Please write the letter you select on the line provided:

____ 11. When I see that we are going to be reading poetry in class, I feel

a. overjoyed b. glad c. indifferent d. sad e. miserable

____ 12. If we never discussed another poem again in class, I would be

a. overjoyed b. glad c. indifferent d. sad e. miserable

____ 13. If we did skits and improvisations with the poetry we read, I would be

a. overjoyed b. glad c. indifferent d. sad e. miserable

____ 14. If we could select all of our own reading for the course, I would be

a. overjoyed b. glad c. indifferent d. sad e. miserable

# APPENDIX C

## STUDENTS' CHILDREN'S BOOK CRITIQUE

# APPENDIX C

## STUDENTS' CHILDREN'S BOOK CRITIQUE

Please rate the book using the following categories 5 = high and 1 = low. You may supply a category under "Other."

| CATEGORIES | HIGH 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | LOW 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Playfulness | | | | | |
| 2. Aesthetics | | | | | |
| 3. Vocabulary | | | | | |
| 4. Entertaining | | | | | |
| 5. Other - | | | | | |

Average Score _____

(Add all numbers and divide by 5)

# APPENDIX D

## STUDENT EVALUATION OF LITERARY WORKS

# APPENDIX D

## STUDENT EVALUATION OF LITERARY WORKS

Title of Work _____

Date _____

Fill out a separate questionnaire for each poem, passage, book, play you will be judging. Check the area on the line that best reflects your attitude to the work.

| | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Entertaining | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Boring |
| Clear | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Hazy |
| Good | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Bad |
| Creative | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Trite |
| Original imagery | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Cliches |
| Effective | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Noneffective |
| Appropriate for audience | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Inappropriate for audience |
| Aesthetically pleasing | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | ___ | Aesthetically displeasing |

Average Score _____

(Add all numbers and divide by 8)

APPENDIX E

"WOMAN I ADMIRE"

# APPENDIX E

## "WOMAN I ADMIRE"

Select a person you know, a character from literature, or a historical/political figure.

500 word (minimum) typed essay - double spaced - 3 copies

DO have an interesting beginning
elegant, fluid prose
have lots of S. EX. - anecdotes, anecdotes, anecdotes
original, creative figurative language

AVOID: lard
passive voice - unless you can defend its inclusion
cliches, the sentimental, and the trite
vagueness
grammatical errors

HINTS: Be honest. Write about someone about whom you care.

Please use cover sheets provided and have one friendly critique on one of the sheets.

Remember Orwell's Rule #6

Evaluation sheets due back February 16, 1994

Revised essays due February 18, 1994. You will then hand in a packet containing, in this order.

1 revised paper - You MUST make some revisions
1 typed sheet explaining changes you made based on either the evaluations or your own ideas
3 evaluations
1 original essay

**VISUAL/ARTISTIC**

This may be a work of art, preferably in artist's charcoal or black ink, a poem, a diorama, a video. You may wish to work with some of the imagery Morrison uses. Avoid slave scenes. You may be abstract or representational, but you need to be prepared to explain to me and your group what you did. Some suggestions include: character sketch or nature scene, shrinklit, free verse poem, musical score, song, or a comic strip of a particular scene (be very careful that you make appropriate choices and know your two audiences: the teacher and the persons for whom your art is intended).

# APPENDIX E

## CRITIQUES

Author's Student # _____ Period _____

1. General comments:

2. Why were or were you not convinced person is admirable?

3. What did you particularly like about the writing? (imagery, originality, anecdote, etc.) - cite specifics:

4. What about the beginning (the introduction) hooked you?

5. Any lard? Be specific.

6. Suggestions for changes/questions. Try to be specific.

7. Other.

Evaluator's Student # _____ Period _____

Critique by relative/friend/classmate:

APPENDIX F

EVALUATION OF POEM

# APPENDIX F

## EVALUATION OF POEM

Poet _____

Title of Poem _____

Summary and/or meaning of poem_____

_____

_____

_____

Comment - with specific examples -

a. fresh imagery?

b. diction (word choice)

c. syntax

d. rhyme, rhythm

APPENDIX G

SKIT EVALUATION

APPENDIX G

SKIT EVALUATION

Name _____

Title of skit (poem, story, etc.):

_____

| | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audibility | | | | | | | | | |
| Props | | | | | | | | | |
| Focus | | | | | | | | | |
| Language | | | | | | | | | |
| Accuracy | | | | | | | | | |
| Costumes | | | | | | | | | |
| Clarity | | | | | | | | | |

Other (specify)

Bonus (Write down specific reasons):

Total Points: _____ Evaluator # _____

APPENDIX H

COLLEGE ESSAY CRITIQUE SHEET

APPENDIX H

COLLEGE ESSAY CRITIQUE SHEET

Author # _____ & Period ___

Title of Essay: _____

_____

1. Explain why beginning paragraph is or is not eye catching. Consider and relate what technique(s) are used by the author.

2. Comment on the diction.

3. Comment on the use of anecdotal material - where does it occur? Is it appropriate or distracting? How about its length?

4. How is this essay unique?

5. What have you learned about this person that you would not have known from the transcript and resume?

6. Note any grammatical errors.

7. Why would or wouldn't you accept this person to your college?

Evaluator's class period: ____

Student numbers, or names: _____